IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-46 (Canceled).

Claim 47 (Previously Presented): A ceramic body having a high specific surface area, comprising at least one ceramic particle, wherein the ceramic particle comprises at least Si, Al, and Mg and has a needle-shaped morphology; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1 m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 48 (Previously Presented): A ceramic body having a high specific surface area, wherein at least a portion of the surface of the ceramic body is coated with at least one ceramic particle that comprises at least Si, Al, and Mg and have a needle-shaped morphology; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1 m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 49 (Previously Presented): A ceramic body having a high specific surface area in which at least one ceramic particle comprises at least Si, Al, and Mg and has a needle-shaped morphology, wherein at least one selected from the group consisting of pores and elements capable of directly supporting a catalyst component is present on the surface of the ceramic particle; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1 m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 50 (Previously Presented): A ceramic body having a high specific surface area in which at least a portion of the surface of the ceramic body is coated with at least one ceramic particle that comprise at least Si, Al, and Mg and have a needle-shaped morphology, wherein at least one selected from the group consisting of pores and elements capable of directly supporting a catalyst component is present on the surface of the ceramic particles; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1 m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 51 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 49, wherein the pores comprise at least one selected from the group consisting of defects in the crystal lattice of the ceramic particles, microcracks at the surface of the ceramic particles, and a deficiency of an element that constitutes the ceramic particle.

Claim 52 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 51, comprising microcracks having a width not greater than 100 nm.

Claim 53 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 51, wherein the pores have a diameter or width that is not more than 1000 times the diameter of the catalyst ion to be supported and the pore number thereof is at least 1×10^{11} per liter.

Claim 54 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 51, wherein the pores comprise defects formed by the replacement of a portion of a constituent element of the ceramic particle with a metal element that has a different valence.

Claim 55 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 54, wherein the defects comprise at least one selected from the group consisting of oxygen defects and lattice defects and the ceramic body comprises at least 4×10^{-6}% ceramic crystals having at least one defect in the unit crystal lattice of the needle-shaped particle.

Claim 56 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 49, wherein at least one element or more constituting the needle-shaped particle of the ceramic body is

substituted by an element other than a constituent element and the ceramic body is capable of directly supporting a catalyst component by the substitute element.

Claim 57 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 56, wherein the catalyst component is supported on the substitute element by chemical bonding.

Claim 58 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 56, wherein the substitute element is at least one element or more that has a d or f orbital in electron orbitals thereof.

Claim 59 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the needle-shaped particle comprises Si, Al, and Mg and at least one species of Sr and Ce.

Claim 60 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the needle-shaped particle is cordierite.

Claim 61 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 60, wherein at least five unit crystal lattice units from the surface of the needle-shaped particle are cordierite.

Claim 62 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the aspect ratio of the needle-shaped particle is at least 5.

Claim 63 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the ceramic body has a form of particles, pellets, a nonwoven fabric, or a honeycomb.

Claim 64 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the specific surface area of the ceramic body is at least 1 m^2/g.

Claim 65 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb with a porosity of at least 10%.

Claim 66 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, wherein the porosity of the ceramic body is at least 30%.

Claim 67 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a coefficient of thermal expansion in the flow channel direction of not more than $2 \times 10^{-6}/°C$.

Claim 68 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a coefficient of thermal expansion in the flow channel direction of not more than $1 \times 10^{-6}/°C$.

Claim 69 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a crush strength in the flow channel direction of at least 5 MPa.

Claim 70 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a crush strength in the flow channel direction of at least 10 MPa.

Claim 71 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a cell wall thickness of not more than 400 μm.

Claim 72 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 71, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a cell wall thickness of not more than 100 μm.

Claim 73 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a narrow pore distribution width.

Claim 74 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 73, wherein at least 50% of the pore volume is encompassed by the distribution width within ± 1/2 of the value of the average pore diameter.

Claim 75 (Previously Presented): A ceramic catalyst body comprising the ceramic body according to claim 47 which supports a catalyst component.

Claim 76 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 75, wherein the catalyst component is a noble metal.

Claim 77 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 76, wherein the amount of supported catalyst component is at least 0.1 g per liter.

Claim 78 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 75 which further comprises a co-catalyst component.

Claim 79 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 78, wherein the co-catalyst component is at least one selected from the group consisting of lanthanoid elements, transition metal elements, alkali metal elements, alkaline-earth metal elements, their oxides and compound oxides.

Claim 80 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 79, wherein the co-catalyst component content is at least 6 g per liter.

Claims 81-94 (Canceled).